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Housing in Nigeria's New Capital at Abuja: Achievements and Problems

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ABSTRACT

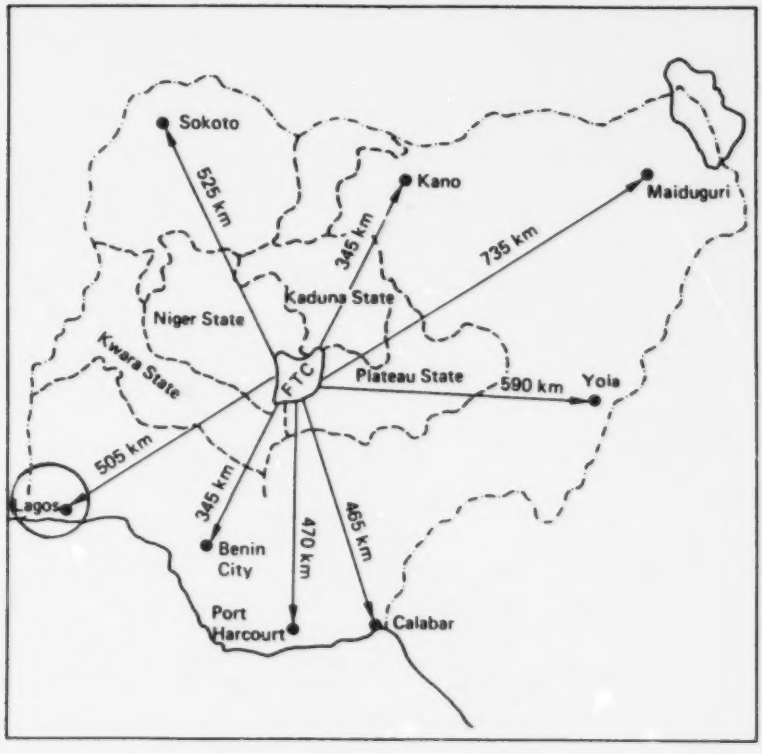
In February 1976, the Nigerian government announced the decision to move its capital from the coastal metropolis of Lagos to Abuja, a vast underdeveloped region in the spatial heartland of the country. This paper determines how far the new capital has come in its implementation since being promulgated fourteen years ago, and whether equitable access has been provided for all Nigerians as was originally intended. It relies on the analysis of housing development in the city to achieve these ends.

In February 1976, the Nigerian government announced the decision to move its capital from the coastal metropolis of Lagos to Abuja, a vast underdeveloped region in the spatial heartland of the country. (See figure 1.) The official intention of this decision was to use the development of the new capital to enhance political unity in the country, by making it a place where all Nigerians could lay claim to every available right, privilege and resource on an equal footing. Implicit in this intention is the understanding that such a city would have to ensure equitable access for all citizens irrespective of demographic or socioeconomic background. This paper reviews housing achievements in the new capital in light of this intention and the fact that the new capital project entailed an awesome sacrifice on the part of all Nigerians in terms of public expenditure opportunity cost. It is the purpose of the analysis to both determine how far the city has come in its implementation since being promulgated fourteen years ago, and whether equitable access has been provided for all Nigerians.

The paper relies on the analysis of housing development in the city to achieve these ends for obvious reasons. Housing in the new capital is a basic urban requirement, the largest land consumer, the major element in the overall cost of the new capital and, arguably, the most visible symbol of achievement. Moreover, as an administrative capital, Abuja is not intended to have a broad economic base. All of these factors suggest that the overall success of the new capital, as well as the goal of equitable access, will be judged on the basis of the residential environment.

The first part of this paper reviews housing goals and achievements in the new capital, while the second part presents facts about the existing housing situation in the city, focusing on the problems of affordability, availability, squatters, segregated development, inappropriate development standards and uneven services. The data presented are based upon information collected during eight months of field research in Nigeria, between September 1988 and April 1989 (Morah 1990).

FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY (FCT)



Source: Okafor 1988.

Housing Goals and Achievements

The desired housing conditions expressed for Abuja have their basis in the reality of urban housing conditions in Nigeria as a whole. In 1952 Nigeria had a modest population of 30.4 million persons. Since this time the country has experienced what may be described as no less than a population explosion, swelling its rate of growth from 1.8 per cent to what authorities estimate to be 3.3 per annum at present. With an estimated 1987 population of 108.5 million, the country is by far the most populous in Africa with one out of every five Africans, or one out of every six black persons in the world, being Nigerian (Morah 1987, p. 161). This enormous growth in population has resulted in urbanization at an equally rapid rate. Overall, Nigeria is characterized by high population density and moderate urbanization. Whereas in 1952 only 8 cities were estimated to have over 100,000 population, this number rose to 30 in 1982. Based on the most recent projections available, 16.5 per cent of the country's estimated 80 million persons reside in urban settlements with a population of over 100,000 (Peil and Sada 1984, p. 35).

This agglomeration of people, egged on mostly by rural-urban migration and natural increase, has meant that the existing urban infrastructure has been unable to cope. A basic urban requirement such as housing, when available at all, has tended to be congested and strained to capacity by intensive usage. Even though dated, table 1 on housing conditions in select urban areas in Nigeria provides a glaring proof of this. In Lagos, for example, 72.5 per cent of the city's households of nearly four persons per household occupied a single room in 1971. This evidently suggests that not enough new houses are being produced commensurate with the rapid rates of rural-urban migration and natural increase. Affordability is another major housing problem, as the chasm between the supply and demand has escalated the cost of renting. As Onibokun (1985, p. 3) observes, "just 15 years ago, 11.2 per cent of the income of an urban worker went into rent. Today, the same urban worker pays as much as 30 per cent of his monthly income on rent."

TABLE 1: HOUSING CONDITIONS IN SELECT URBAN AREAS IN NIGERIA
(1970-71)

URBAN AREA	PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS OCCUPYING ONE ROOM	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PERSONS PER ROOM	PERCENT OF HOUSES WITH TAP WATER	PERCENT OF HOUSES WITH FLUSH TOILET	PERCENT OF HOUSES WITH ELECTRICITY
LAGOS	72.5	3.8	71.7	43.5	93.2
PORT HARCOURT	51.5	2.4	75.0	18.6	81.4
BENIN	48.0	2.2	24.9	4.0	59.3
WARRI	59.9	2.6	62.4	10.9	89.7
KADUNA	63.9	2.1	40.3	14.1	53.3
KANO	69.1	2.4	26.1	1.8	69.1
ILORIN	23.9	1.6	30.7	10.3	28.4
IBADAN	47.3	2.1	33.4	25.2	56.1
AVERAGE	**54.5**	**2.4**	**45.6**	**16.0**	**66.3**

Source: Master plan for Abuja 1979, p. 172.

Also evident from table 1 is the fact that housing shortage and affordability are not the only aspects of the urban housing problem in Nigeria. The quality of urban housing is desperately wanting. Massive urbanization has also meant a high rate of dilapidation, disrepair and generally poor conditions of environmental sanitation. For instance, the average for urban housing with tap water and flush toilet in 1971 was 45.6 and 16 per cent, respectively. This compares with 26.1 and 1.8 per cent for Kano, the third largest city in the country with an estimated 1980 population of 1 million. The master plan for Abuja (1979, p. 171) provides a summary of all these problems:

> In many Nigerian cities today, the vast majority of population are tenants crowded into one- and two-story housing with densities as high as 2,000 dwelling units per hectare, and 50-70 per cent occupying one room and sharing inadequate or intermittent services. Furthermore, tenants are often paying high rents which may exceed 50 per cent of their incomes.

Thus, in light of these conditions, the housing challenge in Abuja was widely perceived to be the striking of a balance among housing quantity, quality and, inevitably, affordability. As formally articulated by the master plan for the new capital (1979, p. 173-4):

> A major challenge in developing an exemplary housing program for the New Capital City is to arrive at a satisfactory balance between residential quality and the ability of households to afford that quality.... The Federal Capital Development Authority (FCDA) must develop a housing policy and program tailored to the needs of the Capital's population.

Table 2 shows housing program options considered for Abuja. On the one extreme was the provision of high standard, single family detached housing for all income groups at a roughly estimated cost of N4,625 million (i.e., N3,125 million plus 48% subsidy) in both capital costs and subsidies. On the other extreme was the provision of high density multi-family dwellings for the low-income groups, semi-detached units for the upper and middle income groups, and uniform infrastructure standards for both categories, at a total cost of about N1,502 million with no subsidies.

A middle-ground solution (Program F) was recommended by the American master planners, based on the argument that a mixed-housing program would satisfy improved standards required for the city and, at the same time, allow for affordable housing for the financially weaker sections of the population. Both the capital costs and the subsidies for this option was placed at N2,125.2 million, making it a reasonable compromise between quality and affordability. Subsequently, a housing target was set for FCDA to provide 25,000 dwelling units and some indeterminate number of serviced residential plots needed to accommodate the 150,000 persons expected to settle in the city by the completion of the first phase of development in 1986. A target was also set for additional 2,000 units of low-cost housing to be built outside of the city by the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) to help accommodate the in-coming civil servants.

TABLE 4.3: HOUSING PROGRAM OPTIONS FOR ABUJA

Option	Detached Semi-Det.	Serviced Land	Flats	Multi Family	Total Capital Cost (mil. N)	Estimated Subsidized*
A. HIGH STANDARD SINGLE FAMILY DET.	L,M,S	L,M	--	T	3,125	48
B. DETACHED, REDUCED STANDARDS	L,M,S	L	--	T	2,119	27
C. HIGHER DENSITY, NO SUBSIDY	S	L,M	L,M,S	M,S,T	1,502	0
D. REDUCED DENSITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE, LOW SUBSIDY	L,M,S	L,M	M,S	M,S,T	1,751	3
E. MIXED, LOW DENSITY	L,M,S	L,M	M,S	M,S,T	1,813	7
F. MIXED, MODERATE SUBSIDY.	L,M,S	L,M	M,S	M,S,T	1,932	10

Note: L = Large; M = Medium; S = Small; T = Transitional

* Percent subsidized represents fraction of total estimated capital investment not recovered through repayment by residents of the new capital.

Source: Master plan 1979, p. 180.

Between November 14 and December 14 1988, the Statistics Division of the Department of Finance and Economic Development, FCDA was required to carry out a housing census of the FCDA housing program in the FCT. The object of the census was to take stock of the FCDA's housing starts in the territory including the status of those starts. An unpublished preliminary report of this exercise (FCDA 1989) recorded a total of 19,535 housing units starts throughout the territory. Of this number, 15,862 (81%) were completed, while 3,673 (19%) were either uncompleted or abandoned. Within the capital city itself, 7,328 (37.5% of total) units were started; 6,108 (83%) of these were completed; and 1,140 (17%) were uncompleted or abandoned.

As for the 2,000 low-cost housing commissioned by the FHA, a report by the one-time director of Planning and Survey, FCDA claimed that 1,160 units (58%) have been completed; 778 units (36%) were under construction; and 112 units (6%) were yet to be started (Ago 1984). This was claimed to have been the status of the project back in 1983. An attempt to obtain more current information on the project uncovered some puzzling and radically contradictory facts. According to a source in the management cadre of the FHA, "the status of the agency's total housing involvements in the territory is more like 200 units completed and 80 under construction as at May 1989. And most of these are hardly low-cost as the cheapest housing currently being marketed by the corporation is around the N50,000 price range."[1]

Regarding the target of providing serviced plots for private housing initiatives, the number of applications for plots approved by the FCDA suggests that up to 2,747 plots may have been readied by 1989. However, the field experience is that many of these plots remain unserviced with requisite infrastructure, which may explain in part the observation by the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) (1984, p. 26):

> 2,500 plots have been allocated for residential development and 50 plots for commercial development. Only ten of the allocated residential plots are being developed by private developers. This indicates the low level participation of private developers in the development effort of the city.

This is in spite of the observation that Abuja, at the time, was "becoming increasingly popular with industries" (Koko 1983, p. 128). Based on visual inspection of developments in the city, this trend appears to have changed little to the present time. There may be up to 10 private houses completed and occupied with another 20 - 30 under construction. Apart from this low level participation, what is noteworthy about completed private residential developments in the city, is that they have tended to be in the form of expensive single family dwelling as opposed to a tenement or "rooming" house.

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1. Previous to a series of major official currency devaluation starting from 1986, N1.00 = $1.65 U.S. Currently N1.00 = $0.15 U.S.

Housing Problems

Affordability. As might be surmised from the concerns expressed in the master plan, the biggest problem with housing in Abuja is that the houses provided are too expensive and, consequently, affordable to only heavily subsidized civil servants and major private sector institutions such as banks. Tables 4 to 6 on incomes and housing construction costs in Abuja demonstrate this fact. They show that, even when housing costs are treated for graft (table 6) and 20 per cent of gross current income is amortized over a quarter of a century at no interest, over 80 per cent of the civil servants cannot afford the type of houses that were being built up to 1982. For non-government workers in small scale industries, this non-affordability rate is higher at over 95 per cent.[2] At the 1982 treated cost of $32,375 U.S. (or N19,623) for a one bedroom executive-type apartment house, only those civil servants at grade level 08 and above on the government pay scale in 1989 can afford the cheapest housing being built in the city without subsidy.[3]

Clearly, what the foregoing statistics imply is that no civil servant in Abuja today can afford the public housing they occupy without heavy government subsidies. It is interesting to note in this regard that houses costing up to $652,800 U.S. (or N395,640) were being built for legislators and advisers whose maximum housing affordability is less than $116,000 (or N70,000). A comparison of the rent charged to bank officials up to 1986 with the rent currently charged to civil servants, suggests that an annual rental subsidy of between 83 - 94 per cent may be required to make the current stock of housing affordable to the civil servant occupants. This rate of subsidy compares to the 10 per cent rate initially envisioned by the master plan. (See table 2.)

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2. Since corruption in Nigeria is found to be more rife in the public rather than private sector (Oluwo 1983, p. 291), it would be inappropriate to use housing costs treated for graft in referring to this group. Official cost quotations are used instead. The non-affordability rates of 80 and 95 per cent for both government and non-government workers were achieved through a further disaggregation of the groups' income distribution.

3. Grade level 08, 09 and 10 are the entry levels for bureaucrats with Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. degrees, respectively.

TABLE 4: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY BY CIVIL SERVANTS IN ABUJA
(BASED ON CURRENT NOMINAL INCOME)

SALARY GRADE LEVEL	01-06	07-08	09-12	13-17
(%) OF CIVIL SERVANTS	72.5	13.2	10.4	3.9
ANNUAL INCOME (IN NAIRA)	1,500-2,418	3,174-3,924	5,112-8,034	8,712-13,812
20% OF INCOME FOR HOUSING*	300-484	635-785	1,022-1,607	1,742-2,762
TOTAL PAYMENTS OVER 25 YEARS	7,500-12,100	15,875-19,625	25,550-40,175	43,550 69,060

* The goal stated by the government of Nigeria is that "no one should pay more than 20 per cent of income in rents.... For low-income earners, rent should be fixed between 10 and 15 per cent of income" (Master plan 1979, p. 176).

Source: Author.

TABLE 5: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY BY NON-GOVERNMENT WORKERS
IN SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES IN THE ABUJA MUNICIPALITY (1988)

ANNUAL INCOME (IN NAIRA)	1,200-2,400	2,400-3,600	3,600-6,000	6,000-ABOVE
(%) OF LABOUR POPULATION	66.6	26.7	5.7	1.0
20% OF INCOME FOR HOUSING	240-480	480-720	720-1,200	1,200-ABOVE
TOTAL PAYMENTS OVER 25 YEARS	6,000-12,000	12,000-18,000	18,000-30,000	30,000 ABOVE

Source: Author. Based on income data by NISER (1989).

TABLE 6: OFFICIAL AND TREATED COST OF HOUSING CONSTRUCTED BY THE FCDA (1982)

HOUSE TYPE	OFFICIAL AVERAGE COST	ADJUSTED COST+	U.S $*
1 BD	N26,164	N19,623	$32,375
2 BD	N29,739	N22,304	$36,800
3 BD	N48,742	N36,557	$60,300
4 BD	N77,324	N55,993	$92,375
5 BD	N527,521	N395,640	$652,800
6 BD	N269,562	N202,181	$333,600

BD = BEDROOM

+ "Corruption is a major problem of national development in Nigeria. The practice is prevalent at every level; polity, administrative, as well as the upper and lower levels of the bureaucracy. Corrupt practices occur in nearly all ministries, departments, and agencies. The practice is more widespread with each passing day." This was the opening remark of an article by Aina (1982, p. 71), assistant chief management development officer, the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria. This view is shared by several Nigerian scholars including Oluwo (1983; 1985) and Achebe (1983), an internationally acclaimed novelist who went as far as to entitle his treatment of the subject as ***The Trouble with Nigeria.***

All this, particularly the suggestion from the above references and elsewhere (Carino 1985) that corruption in developing countries is a "shared" system, leads to the conclusion that any calculations to determine housing affordability in Abuja that relies solely on nominal incomes of civil servants is apt to be flawed. That is, just as any attempt to obtain information on corrupt earnings of civil servants is equally likely to be flawed. Three rudimentary problems confront any attempt to operationalize a unilateral treatment of civil servants' income data in Nigeria for earnings through corrupt practices. First, the majority of the civil servants may not be corrupt; second, earnings from corruption tend to be incredibly widespread, depending on official rank and role (e.g., whether in a gate-keeper's role or not); and, third, data in the area is unavailable as transactions normally go unreported.

In order to resolve this difficulty, this paper stands the problem on its head by asking: what if corruption was not a factor in producing the existing stock of housing in the new capital, what then might the affordability picture among the civil servants' group look like? An answer is developed based on a report by a western architect who worked in Abuja during the construction boom time. After chronicling widespread corruption involving the method of awarding housing contracts in the city, the architect's conclusion was that "non-construction percentage on-costs add at least 25 per cent, and possibly more, to cost of work in Nigeria" (AJ 1985, p. 78). The "adjusted" cost estimates are achieved using this rather conservative estimate to deflate the official quotation on housing cost.

* Figures reflect the equivalence of the adjusted cost in U.S. currency, using the 1982 official pre-currency devaluation exchange rate of N1.00 = $1.65 U.S.. Currently N1.00 = $0.15 U.S..

Source: Author.

Therefore, should the present standards of construction in Abuja be maintained in the face of up to 350 per cent currency devaluation in 1988 and the concomitant spiral of inflation, it is not inconceivable that this rate of subsidy would quickly approach the 100 per cent mark. That is, assuming no inflationary increase in civil servants salary as insisted upon by the structural adjustment program forced upon the country by both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. An indication of this prediction can already be seen from the fact that, within the space of just a few months between 1988 and 1989, prices rose by as much as 4-fold for basic indigenously sourced building materials such as cement, sand, timber and labor. Meanwhile, the rate for imported materials (e.g., rods, ceiling boards, galvanized iron roofing, lighting fixtures, electrical cables, glass, pipe-work, etc.) requiring payment in hard currency, have risen by up to 567 per cent.

With respect to alternatives to finished housing, there appears to have been no serious efforts on the part of government to provide serviced plots for private housing initiatives, much less develop plots that are accessible by the low-income population. Even though the cost of individual plots (high density = N500; medium density = N750; and low density = N1,000) and the application fee (N250) are relatively modest, the distribution of plots on a "first-come, first served" basis made it impossible for the poor to benefit from the scheme. The poor obviously lack the information and political clout necessary to effectively enter such an open competition. In any event, the information that emerged from the field research is that many developers interested in the new capital were kept from building, either because they could not gain access to plots; or the plots allocated to them had not been serviced; or they could not obtain the certificate of occupancy (C of O) without which assigned plots could not be legally developed.

In terms of temporary accommodation, no cheap transient housing was provided as was recommended by the master plan. Over night rates for a standard hotel room in the new capital range from N55 to N210. Bearing in mind that 85.7 per cent of the salaried civil servants in Abuja make a nominal salary of between N5.77 and N15.10 per day, the prohibitive

nature of these rates cannot be mistaken. Yet, these rates are hardly all that is prohibitive about the accommodation, as they are subject to 15 per cent service/tax charge and a deposit of usually twice the room rate is required.

Availability. Housing supply among the civil servants group in the FCT is short relative to demand. This can be seen from the fact that the 1986 building target of 25,000 dwelling units is yet to be met. The 1988 housing census in the new capital discloses that only a fraction of this target (16,062 including the 200 FHA housing) have been completed and certified for occupancy. This means that 96,372 persons can be effectively accommodated in government housing, assuming six persons per unit. When this number of accommodated persons is subtracted from the estimated population of civil servants and their families mandated to move to the territory by 1989 and then divided by six persons per housing unit, a rough estimate of housing demand is obtained that is in the excess of 3,400 units. However, three factors suggest that all the members of this group are probably reasonably housed for the present time.

First, ministries mandated to move to Abuja are usually assigned housing before actually being uprooted from Lagos. Second, not all the ministries mandated to move by 1989 have done so (e.g., the Ministries of Education and Finance had not moved as at April 1989). Lastly, two civil servants sometimes occupy the same unit of housing. A portion of street-level professionals (e.g., grade school teachers and nurses/midwives) who qualify for housing assignment from the FCDA are females and tend to be wives of other civil servants who already have a housing allocation. For example, 623 grade school teachers in the FCT in 1987 were women. Even though it is not known what portion of this group is single or married, it is not unreasonable to suspect that many of them are wives of civil servants transferred from Lagos. The same argument applies to the 256 nurses/midwives in the territory who are female.

Thus, in the case of the civil servants group, it could be said that none of them ought to be squatters. It could also be said that none of the excessively well-to-do private individuals ought to be squatters, given the availability of 3,000 or more hotel rooms in the city. The hotel industry has been the only area in the new capital to realize strong private sector participation. But most of the participants in the area have tended to be major players in the industry (e.g., Hilton, Sheraton, Hyatt and the Nigerian Government), which meant that financial capital and access to land were not a problem. What this implies is that a higher level of private sector involvement could also have been achieved in residential development, had the government undertaken to guarantee access to serviced plots and mortgage facilities.

Squatting. Even though the master plan for the new capital estimated the ratio of non-government to government workers in the city at 3:1 in 1986, to rise to 4:1 in 2,000, the FCDA has made no explicit provisions for non-civil servants to be accommodated. The government's expectation has been that private developers would get involved and somehow respond to this group's housing needs. When this expectation failed to materialize, it is little wonder that all persons who do not have formal ties with the civil service (both the well-to-do and the poor ones among them) are left to fend for their own accommodation. While it is conceivable that some of the affluent members of the non-civil servants population may be able to satisfy their housing needs by buying and developing plots, the important point is that a large portion are excluded from the housing market as a result of their low income.

This exclusionary nature and non-affordability of housing in the city has contributed to considerable squatting. Despite the fact that statistics on the magnitude of this problem could not be obtained, and that authorities in Abuja have so far been successful in dismantling all squatments erected within the capital city proper, the findings from the field research are that squatting is a major problem. After much reckoning which excludes the indigenous population, it is surmised that the housing needs of approximately 246,000 (or 46%) people in the FCT could not be accounted for; and that about 100,000 of these *de facto* squatters are located within the Abuja Municipality, in the villages of Garki and Maitama immediately

surrounding the capital city. This compares to about 45,000 civil servants and their families who are adequately accommodated in the city.[4]

It may be asked why not a bigger population of squatters in Abuja in light of the country's huge population and the heavy concentration of capital and public infrastructure in the territory. The answer is partly due to government actions to keep the squatters in check, but mostly to the existence of Suleja, a satellite squatter colony approximately 30 miles from Abuja. Estimated below the rank of an urban area in 1977 at 10,000, the settlement's population increased dramatically to nearly half a million in 1983 (Gandonu 1984, p. 9). As the principal provider of support services needed to sustain the new capital's population, the urban problems of Suleja have multiplied several fold. An extensive tour of various parts of this town revealed its appalling urban conditions to be either equal to or worse than those found in the most horrid sections of Lagos. No form of public infrastructure or service exists in the town. Hindsight seems to suggest that the site selection panel for the new capital may have envisioned this occurrence and carefully excised the settlement from the FCT. Note the deliberate "V" shape along the northern borders of the FCT in figure 2.

Returning to squatters in the villages of Garki and Maitama, the FCDA's policy is to continue to dislodge them by force, and to punish such actions by prosecution or fine. Specific information secured with regards to the authorities' treatment of the squatters, is that the FCDA, in conjunction with the Nigerian Police Force, periodically engage in a ferret-demolish exercise aimed at keeping the squatters from becoming entrenched. The official justification normally given for the demolitions is that such structures contradict the directives of the master plan which is a legal document. Further, it is alleged by officials that such establishments provide a haven for law offenders and abet criminal activities in general.

4. Although there is yet to be an official count to determine the number of people in the territory, one thing suggests that the estimates of the squatters might be accurate. The population of the uncontrolled settlements around Brasilia in 1962 (i.e., roughly a decade after construction commenced in the capital) was at least 40 per cent of the total of the metropolitan area (Epstein 1973). Like Brazil, Nigeria is a populous and resource rich developing country; and, like Brasilia, Abuja is centrally located in a backward region of the country, and construction of the city commenced just over a decade ago in 1978.

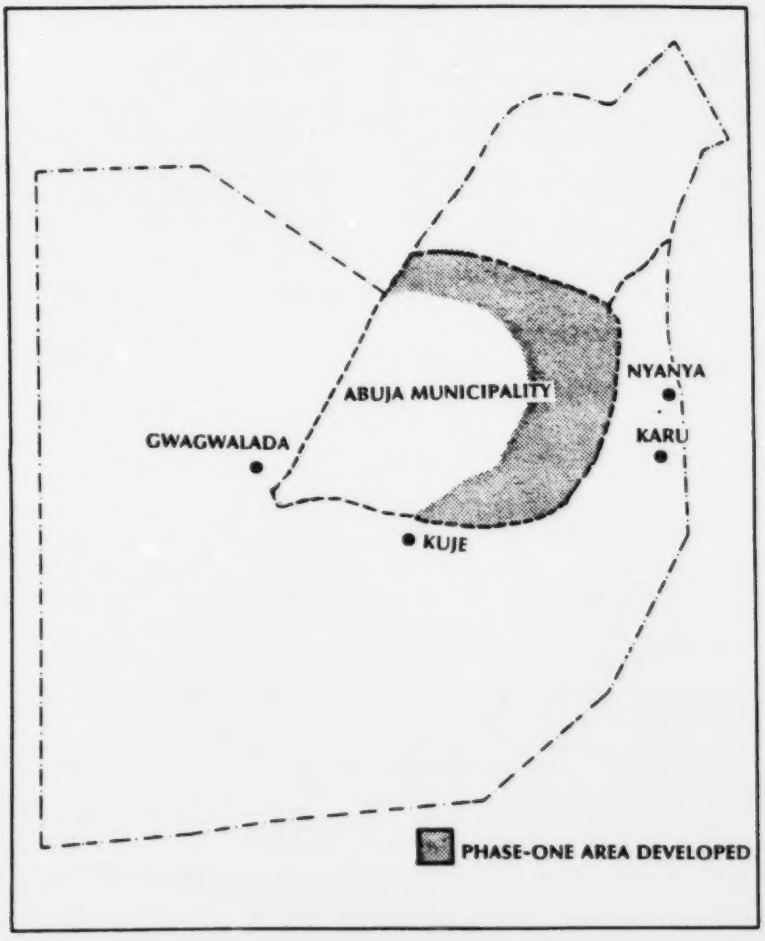
Normally when dispersed by force, the squatters either attempt to integrate with the estimated 125,000 indigenes in the Abuja Municipality, or they fan out to the outlying satellite towns, making their reappearance almost inevitable.

Segregated Development. The initial recommendation of the master plan was for the FCDA tc adopt a mixed housing scheme. But the agency claimed to have found it difficult to reconcile this scheme with the reality of social stratification in Nigerian society. Consequently, it resorted to segregating housing developments by income groups and, somewhere in this process, houses intended for the low-income got zoned to the outskirts of the city. Of the 9,941 one-bedroom units directed at the junior civil servants, 80 per cent of them were meant to be built elsewhere in the FCT, almost all of this in Nyanya and Karu which are at least 10 miles from the city limits. (See figure 2 for the location of the towns.) This implies a major inconvenience for the low-income officials and their families in terms of commuting costs and ease of access to government offices at the center. However, the fundamental problem with this scheme of segregated development is that it entrenches inequality in the physical fabric of the city, which runs counter to both the general underlying spirit of the new capital and the specific notion of developing the city as "an exemplary housing program" for the nation (Master plan 1979, p. 173). Further, there is the problem of inevitable "slumfication" of these low-income estates, as public policy neglect of the areas can be expected to follow.

Presently, crowding both within dwellings and otherwise is a problem in most of the low-income areas. Housing allocation procedure in the new capital is based exclusively on salary grade levels, such that the higher a civil servant is on this scale the more the entitlement for additional rooms. This method obviously fails to take into account household size, which meant that one bedroom units were generally assigned to low-income staff who typically have larger families than senior officials. The problem that this creates is most noticeable in the Nyanya labor camp which officials fear is developing into a slum area. The settlement was established at the beginning of the new capital construction to serve as a temporary home for the labor needed to build the city. It comprises the single room row house type as opposed

to the executive-type one-bedroom apartment units which have parlour spaces and are self-contained. Built at a cost of $12,121 (or N20,000), each row house contains four distinct rooms with shared facilities. Although unlikely, what this suggests is that up to 24 persons may actually live in one such building, assuming an average of six persons per household. In all, 6,687 units of such housing were built in Nyanya, implying a population of approximately 40,000 for a relatively small area.

FIGURE 2: LOCATION OF LOW-COST HOUSING IN THE FCT



Source: Author.

Inappropriate Development Standards. The housing design and residential area layout for Abuja was initially handled by the Milton Keynes consulting group of London. A western architect who worked in Abuja provides the following account, which articulates the widespread feeling in Nigeria that the taste and culture of the indigenes were not taken into consideration in designing and constructing the houses:

> A British new town authority provided plans and house types for use in Abuja.... And here in the middle of the African landscape are built British new town row housing and four storey tenement blocks. Seemingly no attempt has been made to suit the housing to African needs and the Nigerian climate. It looks as if a job lot has been taken out of the plan chest and sold to the FCDA (A) 1985, p. 73).

These dwellings, especially those found in the high density area of Garki, do not have private outside spaces essential for life in Africa. For instance, there is no outside space for low income families to supplement their income through their usual practices of keeping small live stock and growing a petty amount of crops. Yet, "the planners allocated a total land of 32 per cent to recreation and open space whereas the Nigerian standard is 4 per cent" (Onibokun et al. 1984, p. 349). No provision is made for places to hang clothes to dry despite the fact that washing clothes is a frequent occurrence for families in hot, humid climates. There are no adequate recreational facilities where children can play outdoors, away from the roads, but within sight of their house. Despite being very much part and parcel of the Nigerian way of life, there is no place in the house plans of the city to accommodate servants, drivers, security guards and the hangers-on of extended families.

The quality of the already completed houses, especially those built by Nigerian contractors, is astonishingly poor. Acknowledging this deficiency, the one time director of Planning and Survey, FCDA wrote that "the major problem facing the building of Abuja so far as housing was concerned is the poor construction recorded in quite a large number of houses so far done" (Ago 1984, p. 10). The same architect who articulated the unsuitability of housing designs in Abuja, had this to say about the quality of houses constructed:

> The quality of all but a very few of the buildings is abysmal. Pride in workmanship and materials does not exist. Quality control is unknown. Buildings have been accepted by the FCDA that have out-of-plumb walls visibly bulging and hanging over their footings, staircase risers varying by 100 mm, timber-work straight from the forest, twisted, rough and nail-fixed. Tilling is cracked, out-of-square, uneven and stained. Finished houses appear to be the work of inept and demented jerry-builders. In too many contracts the aspirations, the expenditure and the effort have resulted in buildings that would best be bulldozed away (AJ 1985, p. 74).

It is interesting to note that some blocks of flats were indeed bulldozed as a result of debased quality of construction. At any rate, because only the worst ones were torn down, not too many flats were affected. This atrocious record of workmanship is explained by several facts: (1) housing contract awards were not based on merit or price; (2) generally unproven contractors in building construction were hired; (3) building materials specified in the contracts were never used; and (4) thorough supervision during construction was lacking.

Having said the above, it should then hardly be surprising that maintenance in the city is already a problem. Almost all the residents interviewed showed great concern for the issue. They reported that housing fixtures either never worked properly or they have since developed problems and stopped working. There was mention of some structural flaws (e.g., cracks in walls and leaky roofs), but most of the problems reported involved electrical wiring and fixtures, and the plumbing system (e.g., leaky faucets and toilet). With the fiscal crisis of the state brought on by the troubled international oil economy, the fear by the residents is that the government would not be able to cope; and that they might ultimately be called upon to make the repairs themselves with their meagre disposable income.

Uneven Services. As far as physical infrastructure is concerned, not all official residential areas in the FCT have water and electricity. Most residential areas outside of the city of Abuja are without pipe borne water; they usually have no electricity or are served intermittently by generators. At the time of the field research, the whole of Karu town was without water, and its residents had to either collect water in buckets from far off streams or pay for tanker service. This is notwithstanding the fact that the town is within 10 miles of the capital city.

At present, private telephone service in the FCT is still a luxury. Only a few households in the city and Gwagwalada enjoy the facility. In all, the number of working telephones in these two places is reported to be 2,025. This number presumably includes the few coin box telephones observed in the Garki district of the capital.

In terms of social services, the territory has done reasonably well in the area of education infrastructure. In June 1987, nearly 79,000 pupils were registered in 205 primary schools, 25 secondary schools and 1 college. According to Obiechina (1985, p. 45), only seven primary schools existed in the territory before the creation of the new capital. Consequently, the illiteracy rate among the indigenes, which was estimated at 83 per cent in 1980, has gone down to 75 per cent in 1985.

Much could be improved on the health front. According to health related facts published by the FCDA (1987), there were only 83 beds and 29 certified physicians for the whole of the territory's 344,403 non-indigenous population. That is, assuming the indigenous population is little interested in western health practices. However, a later report by the agency (1988) suggests that this situation stands to be greatly improved when the 300 bed specialist hospital in Gwagwalada opens soon. According to this report, the construction of the hospital is complete, and most of the equipment ordered for it has already arrived.

Transportation in the FCT may be a problem especially outside the capital city. Though the roads leading to the various local government areas were not the problem as much as the shortage of vehicles. The government operates a few small buses within the city itself, but the main modes of transport for the majority are taxis and privately owned Kombi buses. Also, many of the civil servants in the city have their own cars. In terms of air transport, the Abuja airport has an average of 35 commercial flights per month.

For economic services, 13 banks have so far opened branches in the region with many more reported to follow. Limited petty goods and services requirements of the residents of the city are normally met through the district neighborhood centers. However, variety of goods can only be found at the main market which convenes at various locations across the

FCT on a rotating basis. Manufactured goods (textiles and plastic artifacts) and perishable food stuff can usually be found in these markets. Otherwise, there is the Suleja market outside the FCT which convenes daily and offers the most variety of goods and especially technical/non-technical services.

Summary and Conclusion

This paper reviews housing development in Abuja in the hope of learning how far the project has come in its overall implementation, and to what extent the city is being developed with a view to making it accessible to all Nigerians alike. It is the conclusion on the former aim that Abuja has come a long way in its ultimate goal of becoming a reality. The city today is very much a livable and viable city of about 45,000 people. It outwardly appears not to have any aggravated urban problems, compared to urban conditions described earlier for Nigeria. The structures are relatively new, the roads are well paved and decorated with trees and light fixtures, development of squatments has been kept in check, pollution is almost non-existent, and human and traffic congestion is nothing to compare to that of Lagos. In short, in terms of the quality of the urban environment, the new capital is a haven for Nigerians who long for the amenities of a modern society but without its headaches and pressures.[5]

Nevertheless, according the analysis here, this very fact that urban standards for Abuja far surpass that of other Nigerian cities, has also been the chief problem of the city as residents cannot afford these standards. Of the current stock of housing in the city, none of it is affordable by the civil servants without a government subsidy of between 83 - 94 per cent of annual costs. Without any subsidy, only about 20 per cent of the civil servants can afford the cheapest type of housing provided. Other crucial housing problems in the city include the fact that houses for junior civil servants were relegated to significant distances from the

5. For a territory of over half a million persons, the official information on crime published by the FCDA (1987), however inaccurate, simply reinforces the assertion that Abuja today is a livable city.

city; and that no serious efforts have been made to provide housing for the FCT's 240,000 non-civil servants squatter population.

Hence, rather than act as a symbol of political unity by promoting equal opportunity among citizens through wider access, Abuja promises to be a symbol of disharmony, a divisive element to further erode the Nigerian polity. The development of the city has only succeeded in heightening the contradictions between rich and poor Nigerians along occupational lines, not altered the system of inequity. And unless major policy changes are pursued to counter the exclusivity image of the project, the new capital for the foreseeable future would most probably remain essentially: *a heavily subsidized urban haven for civil servants; a place where they can enjoy the amenities of a modern community without the nuisance of the 'common man.'*

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